

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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ALABAMA SALAMANDER PROPOSED FOR ENDANGERED LIST

A unique Alabama resident--the Red Hills salamander--is being proposed for listing as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The proposal was published in the Federal Register on October 1. Public comments are invited through December 1, 1975. Comments should be addressed to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. 20240.

The entire geographic range of this small amphibian is confined to a 60,000-acre area of south central Alabama. The Red Hills salamander inhabits burrows in forested ravines shaded by an overstory of predominantly hardwood trees where the forest floor is moist and relatively cool. There, spiders, millipedes, and other invertebrate life which constitute the bulk of the salamander's diet are abundant.

About 60 percent of the 60,000 acres of remaining habitat is currently owned or leased by paper companies which primarily use clearcutting techniques of forest management. This completely destroys the habitat of the Red Hills salamander. The remainder of the available habitat in private ownership is also subject to alteration. Conversion from forest land to pasture or cropland is occurring in the area. The specialized habits of this salamander, along with its low reproductive rate and inability to disperse, preclude its movement into adjacent areas.

Overcollecting for commercial, scientific, and educational purposes appears to have also contributed to the decline of the species at those localities which are well known to collectors.

The Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intends that finally adopted rules be as responsive as possible to the conservation of endangered and threatened species. He has notified the Governor of Alabama of this proposal and has requested his comments and recommendations. An environmental assessment concerning this animal's situation is under preparation.